

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 22, 2015

Meeting No.: 198

Project: Point Street Apartments

Phase: Continued Final

Location: Harbor Point P.U.D. – Point and Wills Street

PRESENTATION:

The presentation began with a statement by Mr. John Flesher of Beatty Development who described the goals of the project within the context of the Harbor Point PUD. Mr. Flesher confirmed that there is still uncertainty whether the Phase Two building will be residential or commercial; however the Point Street residential tower will be built with its associated plaza.

Mr. Kevin Johnson (Ayers Saint Gross) reviewed the changes to the design of the 289-unit building made in response to the Panel’s comments from the December presentation. They included, but are not limited to: added operable windows to the west façade, a clarification to the volumes of the building, reduced the visible weight of the “band” at the amenity level, and established a stronger gesture to the residential entrance on Point Street. The addition of a “crown” on the residential tower element was considered, as requested, but the design team decided not to add this element after review.

Mr. Ronnie Younts (Younts Design) reviewed the signage for both the residential component of the tower and the commercial elements. Standing letters will be positioned on the canopy of the residential component. They will be internally illuminated. Commercial tenants have multiple choices for the signage configuration, including mounted directly to the building or on a metal rail, and the possibility of including the addition of awnings of various extensions: 2’-6”, 3’-6”, and 5’-0”.

Landscape Architect, Mr. Richard Jones (Mahan Rykiel), reviewed the site elements focusing on concerns expressed by the Panel at the last presentation. Mr. Jones commented on the lack of connection from the east side of the plaza to the street – it cannot be accommodated due to the location of transformers and the loading dock below; the re-introduction of the “green” wall on the west side of the park area; the challenges of creating a buffer between the park and the adjacent Morgan Stanley (MS) building; opening up the MS “alley” at grade; the configuration of seating into more “conversational” groupings; and the decision to proceed with metal benches in the Plaza grove rather than fabricating with wood. No confirmation of soil depths for planting over structure was offered as requested in the previous submission, and the request for an interim Phase One plan for how the site will read from the public’s perspective was not offered (Mr. Jones did offer information about Phase One character from the Plaza level, however).

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

There was a general consensus that both the building and the associated site have progressed handsomely from their previous iterations. Key recommendations from the Panel are summarized below:

Building:

- The scale of the residents' entry on Point Street continues to be of concern to the Panel. It does not differentiate itself from the commercial tenants in a manner that focuses on the real use of the building – a residential tower – and the adjacent commercial spaces can easily read in conflict given the multiple selections of signage and identity devices offered to commercial tenants. The residents' entry “bleeds” into the adjacent commercial venue and conflicts with the differentiation between tenant and commercial entities. Perhaps take advantage of the brick coursing above the current entrance to make the canopy more substantial. Consider bringing the canopy overhang to the street curb.
- Reconsider having a drop-off at the Point Street entry to aide tenants and to reinforce entrance.
- The lobby of the building is too small for the scale of the building – it reads as “utilitarian”. Please consider moving the leasing office from its current location to allow a visual connection between the Point Street entry and the Plaza entry one level up.
- Shallow awnings for the commercial entities are reasonable; deep awnings are of concern when used in conjunction with the signage rail armature. Select one awning typology and use it to unify the entire composition. Presently, there are too many options.
- The mid-level band of the building should read as “residential” with added operable windows in a manner used elsewhere on the structure.

Landscape:

There are still some lingering concerns about landscape elements, though there is a general consensus that the site will be a fine asset to the development. Concern about the interim-phase landscape plan has not been addressed as seen from off the property. The Department of Planning should understand what will be implemented in the near term should the Phase Two building not go on line immediately following the completion of the Phase One structure. What will be in place as a site amenity should the second building not come on line as desired?

- There is still concern for the “dead end” condition of the upper plaza area. If the location of the generators and the loading dock below are obstacles to getting someone down to the street level of the eastern portion of the Plaza, then consider setting the Point Street Tower façade back or carve out a portion of the interior space to allow some passage to occur.
- See Drop-Off comments above with regard to streetscape elements.
- Please insure that there are sufficient soil volumes to account for the prospect of “true-to-nature” tree growth for over-structure areas – demonstrating structural volumes using sections is appreciated for future presentations to UDARP.
- There is continuing concern about the quality of the MS Alley space and the viability of plant material within the wall, and the character of the space given the height of the wall.

PANEL ACTION:

Panel recommends Approval with the above comments.

Attending:

Ronnie Tounts – Younts Design

Jonathan Flesher, Chris Mfume – Beatty Development

Richard Jones, Michael Hume – MRA

Daniel Henson – Henson Development

Todd Harvey BHC Architects

Kevin Johnson – ASG

Adam Bednar – Daily Record

Kevin Johnson – BBJ

UDARP Panel Members –Messrs. Gary Bowden, Rich Burns, David Haresign, and David Rubin*

Planning Department - Director Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon, Wolde Ararsa